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VI.

THE BEST WORK OF FALSE FAITHS.

APPROPOS of Gail Hamilton's article entitled "Good Works of False Faiths," in the January number of the *REVIEW*, permit me to say a word about what seems to me the best work of these same "false faiths."

Never has there been in the history of the Christian religion such universal tolerance as there is at the present day. Every denomination has broadened. Unitarian meets Episcopalian; Episcopalian, Presbyterian; Presbyterian, Methodist, and all meet Romanist in a spirit which a short time ago would have seemed incredible. This tolerance began practically with Schleiermacher in Germany. Thence it extended into England. Our own great divines have caught the spirit of the age; and their respective congregations, wondering at first, but soon becoming reconciled to the new order of things, have peacefully followed their leaders. Scientists declare that the change is due to scientific influence; philosophers, that it is only another evidence of a growing and perfecting civilization; while not a few maintain that Christianity has reached this broad outlook by her own peculiar and inherent power. There seems to me, however, to be another cause which has also done its share toward producing these results, and that is these same "false faiths." Within a few years—the years in which tolerance has become general—we have given to oriental religions much careful and sympathetic study. In this study we have naturally compared these religions with our own, and by this comparison we have discovered that much of that ethical greatness and sweetness which we, in our bigotry, thought to belong to Christianity alone, has lived for centuries in the religions of the East. Brahminism, with its subtle philosophy, and its worship of the infinite and absolute; Buddhism, with its strict code of morals, its charity, its tolerance; Zoroasterism, with its reverence and filial love, have indeed been revelations to us who have been taught to believe that the Orient is a region of corruption, and that all faiths save Christianity are, as the early fathers of the Church denounced them, "the works of the devil." To this oriental study then, is largely due the spirit of the age; for, by seeking the good in other religions, we have not only come to see more clearly the good in our own religion, but our mind and hearts have been broadened by the very process of comparison. And so the ancient teachers of the East are doing their greatest work by leading us out of a petty, self-imposed conservatism, into a universal fellowship and good will.

A. C. BOWEN.